

MATCH | Issue on frontcourt

CONTINUED FROM PAGE T3

Frontcourt: Cyclones

There is no secret to the Wildcats approach to playing inside. Be tougher than the opponent, outwork them, out-physical them, and hope you don't get in foul trouble. Senior Thomas Gipson and junior Nino Williams are both undersized, but work extremely hard and provide the Wildcats with a lot of energy. Senior Shane Southwell has struggled to find a rhythm all season, but matches up well with Iowa State's ability to stretch the floor.

The Cyclones frontcourt stretches the floor as well as any team in the country, and makes you pay if your post players can't guard the 3-pointer. Senior Melvin Ejim and junior Georges Niang are averaging a combined 35 points per game, and have given opposing defenses trouble with their versatility as forwards.

The only way the Wildcats can win the matchup in the front court is if Gipson is able to bully Ejim and Niang on the block. Defensively, K-State will struggle to find a lineup that can slow down the Cyclones, so the Wildcats will need to score lots of points to keep it close.

Matchup of the Game: Iowa State's offense vs. K-State's defense

The Cyclones average approximately 84 points per game, which is good for first in the Big 12. On the flip side, K-State holds its opponents to 64 points per game, which is the best mark in the conference. Both teams will likely flex their strengths at different points in the game, meaning the last team to impose their will, will probably come out the winner.

Iowa State is a better basketball team than K-State at the moment. They have fully bought in to Hoiberg's run and gun system, and build momentum quickly with their high scoring offense. With that being said, it should be noted that K-State is a totally different team when playing in Bramlage Coliseum. The Wildcats are improved in nearly every major statistical category when playing at home, and that is confirmed by their undefeated home conference record. If K-State can get a B+ game or better from Foster and limit the Cyclones in the frontcourt, it will be a battle up until the final whistle.

By the Numbers

By TATE STEINLAGE
THE COLLEGIAN



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Iowa State forward **Dustin Hogue** makes a layup as freshman guard **Marcus Foster** and freshman forward **Wesley Iwundu** look on four minutes into the second half of K-State's 81-75 loss to the Cyclones on Jan. 25, in Hilton Coliseum in Ames, Iowa. The Wildcats went on a 9-0 run to start the second half, which was snapped by Hogue's layup, clawing back within three points of Iowa State.

4

Iowa State road losses

The Cyclones have only lost five times this year, but four of them have come on the road in conference play. That number could've been five too, but Iowa State was able to sneak away with a one-point, triple-overtime victory in Stillwater, Okla. against Oklahoma State on Feb. 3. The Octagon of Doom could play a key factor in Saturday's matchup.

20.8

Points per game for Marcus Foster in the month of February

The freshman guard has found his groove this month. Since Jan. 28, Foster has logged four games with 20-plus points, including a standout 34-point performance against Texas on Feb. 8. Foster had 20 points against Iowa State earlier this year and he could come up big once again.

18.9

Assists per game for Iowa State

The Cyclones lead the NCAA in this category, dishing out the ball enough to average four scorers in double-digits per game. Senior guard DeAndre Kane is the team's leader at approximately six assists per game.

63.8

Points allowed per game by the K-State defense

That number is in the top 40 in the NCAA this year. However, Iowa State is sixth in the nation in scoring at 83.6 points per game. A lower-scoring game Saturday will favor the Wildcats in pursuit of their 20th win.

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PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Junior forward **Thomas Gipson** scores a layup in the first half of K-State's 65-53 victory over the Horned Frogs in Bramlage Coliseum on Feb. 19. Gipson led the Wildcats against TCU with 16 points.

By AUSTIN EARL
THE COLLEGIAN

On Saturday, the K-State Wildcats will look to stay perfect at home in Big 12 play as they take on the No. 15 Iowa State Cyclones. With a victory, the Wildcats (19-9, 9-6 Big 12) would set a new record for their longest home winning streak in Bramlage Coliseum.

"We're definitely looking for revenge," freshman guard Marcus Foster said. "We can't have a team sweep us. So we have to definitely come out and play hard and keep playing and keep fighting."

Iowa State (22-5, 10-5 Big 12) went undefeated in nonconference play, picking up quality wins against Michigan and rival Iowa. Their season took a bad turn in their third conference game, when they lost their first game to Oklahoma in Norman, Okla. That loss began what would be a three-game losing streak.

Iowa State is back on track after the rough start to conference play, though. After losing four of five games, they have won seven of eight. The Cyclones rank second in the Big 12 behind Kansas, who has already clinched a share of the title.

Cyclone head coach Fred Hoiberg, nicknamed "The May-

or," leads Iowa State. Hoiberg made a name for himself when he played for the Cyclones in the early 1990s, averaging around 20 points per game in his final two seasons. He has an 84-44 record in his coaching career, which has all been at Iowa State. Hoiberg was named Big 12 Coach of the Year in 2012.

The Cyclones' leading scorer is senior forward Melvin Ejim. Ejim's best performance of the season came against TCU on Feb. 8 when he set a Big 12 record of 48 points and had 18 rebounds. He averages 18.4 points and 8.3 rebounds per game.

Iowa State is coming off a 83-66 victory against West Virginia in a revenge game. Earlier in the season, the Mountaineers blew out the Cyclones 102-77. K-State has not played their best basketball as of late. Since the Wildcats' signature win against Kansas, they have struggled. They are 2-2 in their last four games, with the two wins coming against the bottom two teams in the Big 12.

"We grinded out a really good win against a really good team (Texas Tech)," senior forward Shane Southwell said. "We have a really tough last three games starting with Iowa State and I really think we are making strides defensively and offensively. Like you see, we keep getting better and better. Guys are stepping up, we are

really taking on that 'next man up' model and we are really doing well right now."

In K-State's last contest, they beat Texas Tech 60-56 in Lubbock, Texas. That was their first road victory since Jan. 7 against TCU. But K-State has just one loss on the season at home — against Northern Colorado.

"I'd rather play here than at Iowa State, that's for sure," head coach Bruce Weber said.

Iowa State will be the fifth ranked team the Wildcats have faced in Bramlage this season. K-State narrowly won three of those games, but let off some steam against Texas, winning by 17 points.

K-State fell 81-75 to Iowa State when the two teams met in Ames, Iowa on Jan. 25. Ejim and Foster had 20 points a piece for their respective teams. The game was significant for the Cyclones as they snapped a three-game losing streak.

Iowa State seemed to pull away from K-State multiple times in the first contest, but the Wildcats kept clawing their way back into it. Senior guard Will Spradling had nine of the points that helped his team erase a 12-point deficit in under a minute. But K-State failed to execute in crunch time, which led to their demise.

The second battle between these Big 12 foes is scheduled to tipoff at 6 p.m.



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Catching up with former K-State Wildcat forward Michael Beasley



FILE PHOTO | THE COLLEGIAN

Then-freshman forward **Michael Beasley** celebrates a 75-54 win against Texas A&M on Jan. 19, 2008 in Bramlage Coliseum by showing fans his appreciation for their support.

By JOHN ZETMEIR
THE COLLEGIAN

Michael Beasley revamped the K-State basketball program. Beasley came to K-State as the No. 1 ranked high school basketball player in the country, according to rivals.com. In 2007-08, his only season with K-State, he led the Wildcats to their first ever victory over the Kansas Jayhawks at Bramlage Coliseum en route to AP All-American honors. Beasley then declared for the 2008 NBA Draft, where he was selected with the second overall pick by the Miami Heat. He struggled to adjust to the NBA, and journeyed around to several different teams in the league.

Now, Beasley is back with the team that drafted him, and looking to realize the potential scouts saw during his season in Manhattan. We caught up with Beasley last week before the Heat took on the Oklahoma City Thunder. Here's what he had to say:

Did you get to watch the K-State vs. Kansas game the other day?

"You mean when we plucked the Jayhawks? Yeah I watched it, it was a good game."

Have you been able to really follow the program at all since Bruce Weber took over?

"Not as much as I want, but I've seen some of their games – Kansas being one of them. I think (K-State) showed a lot of resilience, a lot of toughness. (Because) we had a nine point lead with two minutes to go, to win in overtime against a team with so much talent, it just shows what Bruce is doing with those kids."

Marcus Foster is doing things that a K-State freshman hasn't done in years. Have you seen his game and what he brings to the court?

"Like I said, I've seen a couple (games, but Foster) is good. I don't think he's as good as I was. No, that's a joke. What Bruce is doing with what he has is definitely great, it's good to see

the school in good spirits again, chasing (an NCAA Tournament) seed. It's just fun to watch. I'm going to try to tune in more and be a little more supportive."

What is the difference between Michael Beasley this season from the first time you came to Miami?

"It's tough. Just me being a player, I'm selfish. We're all competitors, we all want to play every minute and take every shot. But I'm playing with Hall of Famers and guys that are going to be there one day, so I just have to wait my turn. I'm staying ready and doing what I have to do daily, just waiting for my number to be called."

Are you excited for the opportunity to play playoff basketball this season?

"Yeah, definitely, but I'm not thinking too far ahead. Right now I'm just trying to stay in shape. Just trying to take advantage of the opportunity that our team is given and just take it day-by-day for the most part."

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Matching up: Iowa State Cyclones vs. K-State Wildcats

By DAVID EMBERS
THE COLLEGIAN

Backcourt: Toss Up

Iowa State has one of the best guards in the Big 12 in senior De-Andre Kane. The guard averages just over 16.3 points per game, and scores a lot of his baskets out of isolation. Cyclone head coach Fred Hoiberg runs an NBA-influenced system, meaning his plays will feature more one-on-one basketball. In addition, Iowa State does a great job of capitalizing on mismatches, especially when defenses are forced to switch on screens. At 6 feet 4 inches, Kane has the length to take prototypical point guards down on the block and post up.

The guard combination of senior Will Spradling and freshman Marcus Foster provides K-State with a very solid one-two punch. Spradling's ability to make the right basketball play and guard relatively well on the defensive end makes him an ideal player in head coach Bruce Weber's system. With the true point guard role under Spradling's control, freshman superstar Foster is able to focus entirely on scoring the basketball. Foster leads the Wildcats at 15.3 points per game, and does so primarily with his jump shot.

Perhaps the most intriguing matchup in this game will be the Wildcat's defensive effort against Kane. K-State will likely throw multiple players at Kane to give him different looks, but should settle in down the stretch depending on who has done the best job. Freshman Wesley Iwundu has the wingspan and toughness to limit Kane's ability to get off easy baskets, but could struggle when left on an island.

CONTINUED ON PAGE T4, "MATCH"



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Junior forward **Nino Williams** attempts a layup after grabbing an offensive rebound and is fouled by Iowa State junior forward **Dustin Hogue** during the first half of K-State's 81-75 loss to the Cyclones on Jan. 25 at Hilton Coliseum in Ames, Iowa. Nino sunk both subsequent free throws to bring the Wildcats back within three points, down 20-23, with 10:11 minutes remaining in the first half.

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